

[Mrs. Elvira Hobbs Law]

1

Folk stuff - Rangelore

Phipps, Woody

Rangelore

Tarrant Co., Dist. #7 [19?]

Page #1

FC

Mrs. Elvira Hobbs Law, 57, was born on her father's stock farm in Franklin Co., Tenn. Her father, W.K. Hobbs, moved the family to Dallas Co., Tex., in 1890. In 1896, she married a cowboy, R.J. Law, who later became the foreman of the Ben Rusk Ranch in Red River Co., Tex. John Hobbs, her brother, later became a horse trainer after their arrival in Texas, and was employed yearly on the Upchurch Ranch, the Rusk Ranch, and others to train their wild horses as they needed them for their work. A bad business deal forced Ben Rusk into bankruptcy in 1900, which caused Law's dismissal as foreman. Believing the range undependable for a future, he moved his family to Ft. Worth, where he later died. Elvira now lives at 917 Hemphill with her father and children. Her story:

"Well, sir. I've always loved to handle horses, but never was around too many at once 'til after I married R.J. Law in Dallas co. While my dad ran a sort of a stock farm back in Franklin co, Tenn., where I was born on Aug. 29, 1880, he never run many head of horses. I don't recall just how many head of cows he run either, but he never did run over 50 head at a time. That I know.

Library of Congress

"I don't recall too much about Tenn., because we moved away from there in the '90's to come to Dallas co. Nothing much ever happened to me 'til after I met and married Law, and he got to be foremen on the Ben Rusk Ranch on Shawnee Prairie in Red River co., Tex. While I'm not too sure about it, I think there was around 2,000 head of cattle on the ranch with the ' BR' brand. I do know it was pretty close grazing for them cattle on 2,000 acres, but the Rusk people had hay land leased close by for winter feeding. C12 - Tex 2 "Yep, Dec. 15, 1896, was the start of my ranch life. While Law run the ranch, I ran the big commissary on the place. I didn't only sell to the cowboys who boarded with me, but to other ranches around there too. Rusk himself was a beef contractor who got out and hustled business. He tried to sell four-or 500 head of three-year- steers every year, in addition to other small beef contracts.

"My brother, John Hobbs, had the same love of horses I did, and got a job on the Upchurch in the Sulphur River Bottoms. The Upchurch Ranch ran 8,000 head of cattle on about 12,000 acres. His brand was an '8' on the right hip. John liked to work with horses, and got Upchurch to let him wrangle the horse herd. He done just that, and that was where John got his training to be a bronc buster. One season with that herd, and he never done anything else but bust horses as long as he worked around ranches. He used to go to the different ranches and take contracts for busting their hosses.

"One time Knewt Dillard, who sold the Rusk Ranch to Ben Rusk in the first place, sold Ben 70 wild horses he'd trapped and bought in West Texas. That was Knewt's business, handling wild horses. He didn't break them a tall, but just sold them to ranchers. Well, John took a contract to bust all them horses. Many's the time I've seen him get thrown from a horse after he'd rode so long he had the nose bleed bad. That looked to me like the hardest way in the world to make a living, but John seemed to get along at it. It finally done him up in the end, though, because every step he takes today pains him. 3 "There were two horses he never did plum break. Him nor nobody else ever broke them plum good? They were both on the Rusk Ranch, and one of them's name was 'Blaze' because she'd

Library of Congress

be off like a streak of lightning once a man mounted her that'd never rode her to a show-down before. My!, how that horse would tear around is something I could never make you fully realize, because she'd sure pitch and buck.

“The other horse was named 'Star,' because she had a white spot in her forehead just like a star. Star seemed to sense whether a man could ride her to a show-down or not, and if she felt she might be able to throw the man, he was in for a real ride. I never saw a greener stay on her. She could pitch just as bad, or worse, then Blaze, but wouldn't pitch if her rider could really ride.

“John broke both them horses from wild horses, but there was another horse he broke for himself. She was a race mare he named 'Daisy,' because she was such a pretty thing. He won plenty money on her too, because she could really run.

“There's another thing I don't guess many folks thought about, but John never rode a pitching horse with his chaps on. He said he couldn't stay on because he had to clamp his knees too tight, and the leather'd give on him. Any number of times after he'd rode a horse, I've seen him pull his pants legs up, and the blood'd be a-streaming down from his knees where he'd held on so tight, the skin'd give 'way.

“My brother trained a horse for me to ride around on. He was a 'Spanish' horse, and we named him 'Chootaw,' which we later [?] to just 'Choo'. That horse would ride just as pretty, and not [???] a bit of [??] all of a sudden, he'd start 4 pitching. He didn't do but a very little of that, or I wouldn't have had him. However, one time after our second child had come to us, he started pitching when I had one on the saddle in front of me, and one in behind me. He pitched us both off into the sand. There was a time when he started pitching with me by myself, and after he saw he wasn't going to pitch me off this time, he started running. He run to the creek, then stopped all of a sudden. I didn't know he intended to stop, so I never stopped but went on into the creek.

Library of Congress

"It seemed like the cowboys didn't like the Rusk Ranch, or were drifters, because they kept drifting in and then out. Among the best riders that ever came there were Harvey Rawlings, John Lewis, and Bob Roden.

"Bob Roden's riding days were finished on that place. One day, his horse shied at a sand rattler, and started pitching. Bob was pitched off, but his left foot hung in the stirrup. His horse ran round and round a clump of cedars, and drug Bob all the way. Some nigger cow punchers that worked for another ranch, happened to see what was going on, and they roped the horse. Bob lay between death and life for a long time before he rallied, then he left the range a broken man.

"You can't hardly realize just how dangerous a cowboy's work is 'til you've seen the narrow escapes they have. Besides riding broncs and wild horses, there's stampedes to put up with. A stampeding herd is something to be really reckoned with, because it runs over anything it can't knock down if it doesn't look too big.

[????] will start a stampede. 5 A neighbor's boy just walked out to a herd once when a Norther was on, and just because he had his coat over his head, the herd ran over two barb wire fences on it's way toward the house. We had an unusually big log corral on the other side of the barn, and this corral had two big gates which swung outward. It just happened that these gates were open, and the leaders of the herd led the herd right into the corral. We watched for the walls to fall, but they circled after they got in, and started to milling. Well, that's the only way to stop a stampede, is to start the herd milling. Then it runs in a circle 'til it gets tired, then a cow will bawl, others will take it up, and the first thing you know, the whole herd is stopped and some of it is laying down, getting it's wind back. Yep, that's the way it is. Other things that causes stampedes are rains, lightning and thunder storms, coyottes, wolves, and any kind of a wild animal. After a herd has got sort of skittish, any kind of a sudden noise will start it off like an airplane. Just roaring along with the noise of a freight train at full speed.

Library of Congress

"That's about all I know the cowboy's life because I stayed so close to the commissary that I didn't have much time to be running around over the ranch. I don't know what kind of a deal, but some kind of a bad business deal broke Ben Rusk, and he had to let his cowboys go along in the 1900's. Law and I decided we'd better get in a business that was more dependable, so we come to Fort Worth, where he worked for different building contractors.

He's been dead for several years now, and dad and I live [????]